

3140

Mr. CARTER's
Fast-SERMON

Preach'd at

DEAL in KENT.

(Price Four-Pence.)

DEAL

MR. CARTER

ESSEX MON



DE AD KENT

(SOUTH-WEST)

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

C H A P E L

A T

Deal in *KENT*,

December xvi. 1720.

Being the Day appointed by His MAJESTY
for a General Fast, for the obtaining Pardon
of our Sins, &c. And particularly for be-
seeching God to preserve us from the
PLAGUE, with which several other Countries
are at this Time Visited.

By *NICHOLAS CARTER*, A. M.

Curate of the said CHAPEL. *W*

L O N D O N :

Printed for W. TAYLOR, at the *Ship* in
Pater-Noster-Row, MDCCXXI.

A
SERMON

Preached at the

CHAPEL

AT

Deal in KENT,



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LONDON:

Printed for W. TAYLOR, at the Ship in
Pater-Noster-Road, MDCCXXI.

JONAH III. V. 7, 8, 9, 10.

And he caused it to be proclaimed, and published thro' Nineveh (by the Decree of the King and his Nobles) saying, Let neither Man nor Beast, Herd nor Flock, taste any thing; let them not feed nor drink Water. But let Man and Beast be covered with Sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil Way, and from the Violence that is in their Hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce Anger, that we perish not? And God saw their Works, that they turned from their evil Way, and God repented of the Evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.



It is of the greatest Importance to the Happiness of Man, both here and hereafter, to believe that the Providence of God rules the World, and presides over all the Affairs of it.

For

For (not to mention how this Persuasion conduces to our future Advantage) let any one but consider the State and Condition of human Nature, with respect to our present Being, and he will soon be convinced, how much we need the Assistance of a superior Power, and how miserable we should be without it. Who among the Sons of Men, is either wise enough or strong enough, to secure himself from the manifold Mischiefs and Troubles, with which he is beset on every Side? The Depravity of our Passions, the Weakness of our Judgments, and the small Extent of our Ability, from within; and the Ignorance of our Friends, the Wickedness of our Enemies, and numberless Accidents of natural Causes, from without; would be Matter of perpetual Sufferings and Sorrows, were it not for the Interposition of Providence. And how sad would our Condition be, if, when we were under any grievous Calamity, we had no other Power to flee to for Succour, but such as is as weak and helpless as our selves? And
this

this is none of the least Arguments which has wrought the Generality of Men, in all Ages and Places, into a Belief of Providence.

But as the Apprehension of Dangers, and the Sense of Sufferings, much more strongly affect us, than the Remembrance of past or the Enjoyment of present Blessings; so the Belief of Providence has ever flourished best, in Times of Adversity, when Men have either foreseen, or felt any uncommon Affliction. A Proof in each Kind (if a Matter of Experience needed any Proof) is to be met with in this little Book of *Jonah*, now before us. Of the last Sort, is the Behaviour of the *Mariners* (in whose Ship (a) the Prophet was fleeing from the Presence of the Lord) who, in the midst of a mighty Tempest, cried every Man unto his God. And when the Ship-Master found *Jonah* asleep at a Time of such Distress, he spoke with Anger and Astonishment.---*What meanest thou, O Sleeper!*

(a) *Jonah* i. 3, 4, 5, 6.

Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. The other is that of the Ninevites, who, from a Dread of that Destruction which *Jenah* had foretold should in few Days be brought upon them, humbled themselves in an extraordinary Manner, in Hopes that God would spare them upon their Repentance, and not execute the Severity of his Threatning denounced against them. Thus it was proclaimed and published through Nineveh, (by the Decree of the King and his Nobles) saying; Let neither Man nor Beast, Herd nor Flock taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink Water; But let Man and Beast be covered with Sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: Yea, let them turn every one from his evil Way, and from the Violence that is in their Hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce Anger, that we perish not? And God saw their Works, that they turned from their evil Way, and God repented of the Evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.

From

From these Words I shall observe *Five* Particulars, and apply them, as I go along, to our selves ; that our Fasting and Humiliation may be as effectual to us, as that of the *Ninevites* was to them.

The *First* is ; The Proclamation of a Fast.

The *Second* ; The Occasion of it.

The *Third* ; The Manner in which the Fast was observed.

The *Fourth* ; The Motive which engaged the *Ninevites* so to observe it. And,

The *Fifth* ; The Effect of it.

As to the *First* Particular, we learn from the History, that the Fast was ordained by the King and Nobility of *Nineveh*. From whence we may observe, that the Care of Religion was esteemed to be a Part of the Office of the Civil Magistrate. The *Ninevites* were *Heathens*, and had nothing but the Light of Reason to direct them ;

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and from this alone they could see that it was the Duty of the Prince to command, and of the People to obey, in a Case which concerned the Worship of God.

In like Manner, *this Day* has its Authority from the Appointment of the Civil Power. The King *has thought fit, by the Advice of his Privy-Council, to proclaim a publick Fast*; and it lies upon the Conscience of all his Subjects, that they religiously observe it. And what a great Reproach wou'd it be even upon the *Christian Faith*, if we shou'd have less Regard to the Command of our Sovereign, upon this Occasion, than the *Heathen Ninevites* had to the Command of *their King*, in a like Case?

The *Second Particular* to be considered, is, The *Occasion* of the Fast observed by the *Ninevites*. And this was an Apprehension of a terrible Judgment to be sent upon them very speedily to their utter Ruin. And the Ground of this sorrowful Expectation was the

Preaching

(a) *Preaching of the Prophet Jonah, who cried through the Streets of Nineveh, and said, --- Yet Forty Days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. Jonah had his Commission from God ; and the Cause of this fearful Denunciation was the great Wickedness of the People. It does not appear that he worked any Miracle to prove that he was sent by God with this Message of Destruction ; nor did he counsel the Ninevites to repent, as a probable Means of appeasing the Divine Wrath, and causing him to respite their Doom. And yet being thoroughly convinced of their Sins, they soon concluded, both that their Ruin was determined, as the Prophet had foretold, and that nothing but the deepest Humiliation, and a forsaking their evil Ways could save them.*

The Occasion of our present Fasting is the Danger we are in from one of the severest of God's Judgments. The

(a) *Jon. 3. v. 2, 3.*

Plague has raged with great Fury for many Months, in a Neighbouring Nation ; and no one knows how soon we our selves may be visited with it. We are therefore here met together to implore the Mercy and Protection of Almighty God, that he would preserve us from this sore Calamity, with which we are threatened. If he for our Sins, should suffer it to come among us, the whole Nation would become one continued Spectacle of Misery and Desolation. For the *Plague* is more general in its Infection, and more fatal in its Effects, than other Epidemical Distempers. For they are never known to be universal ; nor do they carry off perhaps the Tenth Part even of those that are seized by them. But this seldom begins at a Place, but it infects all the Inhabitants of it ; and hardly one in ten survive it. Nor does it stop where it first breaks out, but corrupting the very Air we breathe, is spread from Town to Town, and carries

A Fast-Sermon.

II

carries Terror and Death throughout an whole Kingdom. No Age, no Sex, no Condition is spared by it ; but Men and Women, Old and Young, Rich and Poor, and the very Beasts too fall a Victim to its inexorable Cruelty. We have heard of the Miseries which Cities have suffered, while this Distemper has been among them ; but no Description can make us conceive them to be half so bad, as in Reality they are, and as we our selves shall feel, if God in Mercy does not keep it from us. The Sick perish for Want of Help, the Well are in Danger of being Starved, and the Dead lie in Houses, and about the Streets, unburied. Children, as they are lamenting over their dying Parents, fall down dead before them ; and Husbands, who have attended their Wife's Funeral, have been buried in the same Grave with them. In some Families All are swept away together ; and in others, none but helpless Infants remain, and who, after they have overcome the Violence
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of the *Plague*, are forced to die with Hunger. In a word ; we *hear* the Groans of Men expiring ; we *see* the Dead carried off in Heaps, or scattered in every Place, and too many for the Living to bury ; the corrupted Carcasses offend our *Smell* ; we *draw in* the infected Air ; we *feel* the Distemper come upon us, and we *dye*.

How just is it therefore that we should *Fast*, and *Pray* to the great God of Heaven and Earth, in whose Hands we are, and who alone can save us, that he would have Mercy upon us, and preserve us from this fore Destruction? He sends (c) *his Judgments into the Earth, that the Inhabitants of the World may learn Righteousness*. He hath hitherto spared us, for which we ought to be truly thankful, and to take Warning from the Correction of others, lest we also, if we continue impenitent, *perish*

(c) *Isai. 26. v. 9.*

by the same Scourge. The *Ninevites* repented at the preaching of *Jonah*, and the Danger we are in ought to have the same Effect upon us. They had no Proof that he had his Errand from God, but what they collected from the Reasonableness of it : And the natural Course of Things, together with the deserved Anger of God against our Sins, ought to make us conclude, that our Destruction is near at Hand, unless we move Heaven to prevent it by our Repentance. And this brings me to consider,

Thirdly, the Manner in which the *Ninevites* observed their Fast. And that was, with outward and publick Marks of a lively Apprehension of the Danger they were in, and of their deep Sorrow for it ; accompanied with a just Sense of their own grievous Wickedness, and an effectual Resolution of Amendment. Thus we read,
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--- (a) *The People of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a Fast, and put on Sackcloth, from the greatest of them, even to the least of them. Even the King himself arose from his Throne, and laid his Robe from him, and covered him with Sackcloth, and sat in Ashes. To be cloathed in Sackcloth, and covered with Ashes, was the Manner among the Eastern Nations, of outwardly expressing their Sorrow upon great and extraordinary Occasions. This was their Habit of Mourning, in Times of fore Calamity, whether publick or private, as may be seen by many Examples in Scripture. To this also was added a very strict and universal Fast; so strict and universal, that neither Man nor Beast, great nor small, were to eat or drink, or even to taste any Thing whatever. And with Fasting they joined their most ardent Prayers, calling mightily unto God, that he would turn away from the Fierceness of his An-*

(a) *Jon. 3. v. 5, 6.*

ger, and change his Purpose, and not destroy them as he had threatened. These were the outward Parts of their Repentance and Humiliation ; but the most valuable in themselves, and consequently the most effectual to the appeasing of the Divine Vengeance, were those of Reformation and Amendment. The *Ninevites* did not content themselves with Ceremony only ; but like Men in earnest, and truly desirous of obtaining Mercy, they resolved to forsake their Sins, and immediately set about it. *They turned every one from his evil Way, and from the Violence that was in his Hand.*

And thus it is that *We* too must fast, if we would move God to preserve us. We ought to forbear at least all the Pleasures of Appetite, and appear on this Day in the usual Forms of Sorrow, and pray to God with all our Heart and Strength, that he would have Pity upon us, his People and Nation, and not deliver us over unto the *Pestilence.*

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O may his Compassion prevail, and save us! May he avert the impending Judgment, which our Sins have deserved, and continue his Loving-Kindness to us!

But if we hope for Mercy and Forbearance, these our Prayers, and this our Fasting, must be the Fore-runners of a thorough Reformation in our Manners. We must seriously consider, every one in particular his own Sins, and beg Forgiveness of them, and resolve, by God's Grace to leave them, and live in the Practice of a universally good Life for the future. This is the only Fast that is acceptable to God, and will cause him to deliver us. Without we thus amend our Doings, and turn from our Impieties, our present assembling is Hypocrisy and Dissimulation, and instead of being a Means of our Preservation, it will still add to God's Displeasure, and bring our Destruction the sooner. If this Day's
Service

Service does not hasten our Repentance, the Words of God by the Prophet, (a) may justly be applied to us. Is it such a Fast that I have chosen? A Day for a Man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his Head as a Bulrush, and to spread Sackcloth and Ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast, an acceptable Day to the Lord? No. But on the contrary, Is not this the Fast that I have chosen? Namely, To loose the Bands of Wickedness, to let the oppressed go free? Is it not to deal thy Bread to the Hungry, and that thou bring the Poor that are cast out, to thy House? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own Flesh? Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here am I; and shall guide thee continually. And those by another Prophet, (b) When they Fast, I will not hear their Cry--- But will consume them by the

(a) Isa. 58. v. 5, &c.

(b) Jer. 14. v. 12.

Sword, and by the Famine, and by the Pestilence. The *Pestilence* is one of the Judgments here threatened against hypocritical Fasters ; and if we, now we are praying to God to save us from it, do not sincerely grieve for our Transgressions, and forthwith forsake them, we provoke him to do to us, what he denounced against the *Jews*, and in Effect hasten that very Punishment, which by our pretended Humiliation we would hope to escape. I come now to the

Fourth Particular, which is, the Motive that engaged the People of *Nineveh* to so remarkable, and solemn an Humiliation. And that was a just Sense of God's Mercy, that he was willing to spare them, if they would behave themselves so as to deserve it. *Who can tell, say they, but God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce Anger, that we perish not ?* And the Event shewed their Notions of this Attribute

tribute to be right ; which is so much the more to be taken Notice of, because they had nothing but the Light of their own Mind to guide them. And if they, who were *Heathens*, and without the Knowledge of God by Revelation, cou'd judge so justly of his Compassion, and Forbearance ; how much more ought we to rely upon him, and to be fully assured, that he is always ready to hear and deliver us, upon our Repentance and Reformation ? The Scriptures fully teach us, and confirm the same by many Examples, that *God is gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth of the Evil* that he designed against Men, when they repent of their Sins, which provoked him. And therefore it would be a sinful Distrust in his Goodness, if we did not firmly believe, that he is never better pleased, than when the forsaking our wicked Courses causes him to stop the Punishment which they have most righteously deserved, and
which

which otherwise his Justice would have brought upon us. If then we change our Manners, and become good Men, the Lord will be our Refuge and Salvation; he will cover us under his Wings, nor need we to be afraid for the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness, nor for the Destruction that wasteth at Noon-Day. Though a thousand fall at our Side, and ten thousand at our right Hand, yet it shall not come nigh us. If we make him our Confidence, and merit his Favour by our Contrition and Obedience, there shall no Evil befall us, neither shall any Plague come nigh our Dwelling.

The Last Particular to be observed of the Repentance of the Ninevites, is the Effect of it. And this was no less than the saving of their City from utter Destruction. God had threatened to overthrow it within Forty Days, and it is not unlikely, that it would have been by the Pestilence, that being one of his great Judgments, and easy to be executed

ted in so short a Time. But when he saw their Works, that they turned from their evil Way, he repented of the Evil that he said he would do unto them, and did it not. And thus, if our Fasting and Devotion be as sincere, and as productive of a good Life, as theirs were, we too shall find Favour with God, and be delivered from the miserable Calamity with which we ~~were~~ ^{are} threatned.

This then is the Thing, which above all we ought to consider, as the only Expedient to obtain the Mercy of God for our Safety. To mortify our Bodies by the Abstinence of a Day, and to cry unto him by new and extraordinary Prayers, will be to no Effect, unless we so repent of our Sins, as to forsake them for the future. Let it be seriously remembered, that to return to our wonted Wickedness, after so solemn an Humiliation, is the most daring Hypocrisy, and will prove a certain Means of God's hastening his Judgments upon us. Let

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us not then be Dissemblers; but as we profess to be sorry for our Iniquities, and desirous to escape the Rod that hangs over us, let us enter upon a new Life, and do our Duty before God and Man. Let us not sooth our selves, that because the *Plague* is said to abate in *France*, our Danger is the less here. For if our Sins deserve it, there will always be Means ready in the Hands of an Angry Providence, to bring it to us. As it begun perfectly unawares there, so we ought never to think our selves out of Danger here; 'till we have amended our wicked Lives, and are become the Friends of God, under whose Protection only it is, that we can be secure. Let all therefore who hear me, soberly lament their Sins, and strive sincerely to forsake them. Let High, and Low; Rich, and Poor; Young, and Old; Men, and Women; Every Degree, Age and Sex, with all Earnestness and Integrity of Heart beg of God, that he would forgive their past Offences, and not enter into Judgment

ment with them: And let them reform their Ways, and turn to him in Newness of Life.

Are any of you common Swearers, or prophane Persons, who slight the Word or Worship of God, in publick or private? Are any of you unjust, or unfair in your Dealings; uncharitable to the Poor, or without brotherly Love to Men of all Ranks and Denominations whatever? Are you guilty of Lying, Evil speaking, Backbiting, and Spreading of Scandal? Do you spend your Time in Idleness, Vanity, or Folly? Do you neglect the Duties and Obligations of your several Callings, or States of Life that you are in? Are you bad Husbands, or bad Wives? Unkind Parents, or undutiful Children? Severe Masters, or careless Servants? Do you not govern your unruly Passions, and live in Sobriety, and Temperance? Are you full of Pride, or Peevishness, or Self-Love?

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Are you discontented with God's Providence, and quarrel at that Condition, in which he has placed you? Do you follow Uncleanneſs, Drunkenneſs, or Theft? Are you guilty of any, or all of theſe, or ſuch like Sins? If you be, you muſt, if you would obtain God's Favour, forſake them. If you deſire that theſe your Prayers, this your Fasting, and theſe your Tears may avail with Heaven to keep you from the ſad Judgment approaching, there is no other Way, but to leave off all your Sins, reform your Practice, and become in Deed and in Truth, good Men. It was *this* that ſaved the *Ninevites*, and it is *this* alone that can ſave you. To conclude; Let us effectually lay to Heart our Tranſgreſſions, and amend our Lives; and then, and then only may we hope that God will ſave us from the moſt dreadfull of all Calamities in this World, and reward us over and
above

A Fast-Sermon.

25

above with eternal Happiness in the
other.

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the Love of God, and the Fellowship
of the Holy Ghost be with us all ever-
more. Amen.*

F I N I S.

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